

Co-chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Currey, Ranking Members Representative McCarty and Representative Berthel, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Yanitza M. Cubilette, and I am a resident of Groton, Connecticut. I am testifying in support of S.B. 1095: An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

All students deserve to feel safe, secure, and supported in their places of learning. Yet too often our schools rely on policing to keep children in line, rather than funding professionals trained to deliver students necessary developmental and behavioral health resources.

For me this journey began over a decade ago in 2011-2012 my senior year at New London High School. I witnessed a fellow classmate get arrested over having a gatorade in class— no contraband, a gatorade. That combined with my own experience of the policing of my family was enough for me to know at 18 that there was no way cops presence could be beneficial in our schools. In 2012- 2013 when Hearing Youth Voices surveyed students from NLHS one of the major outcomes was that students did not feel safer with the presence of SRO's, it was actually quite the opposite. Unfortunately the case of the officer fleeing the scene in the Parkland School shooting in 2018, later continued to prove that their presence does not secure or even increment safety for our students.

Since then I dedicated my work to the point of exhaustion, as a leader in CTs movement for societal and educational change, in 2018 spearheading the co-creating and founding of the CT Black and Brown Student Unions, whos Community First Coalition campaign #CareNotCops is now demanding this change in our schools.

You see, for over a decade now, first my peers and now beloved students in my and our communities have been saying the same things, they want and need more care not cops, when are we going to listen?

According to research by Connecticut Voices for Children, there's no evidence School Resource Officers (SROs) make students or staff safer, but schools with SROs have more arrests and more expulsions than their peer institutions without SROs.

I strongly support S.B. 1095. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote in favor of this bill. Together, we can build an educational system that centers the social-emotional well-being of students through care, resources, learning, and restoration.

Thank you for your time, Yanitza M. Cubilette